3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927
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with material or cooking utensils. The suspicious atmosphere created was always most irksome to us, feeling as we did that our cleanliness much exceeded the demands made by these self-righteous Pharisees.

The *kang* on which we slept was of a different construction from those we had met with elsewhere, this being due to the fact that the only fuel obtainable on this journey is animal droppings. These *kangs* were covered with movable boards, under which a hollow space is left for piling up the dry horse-dung, which, once set alight, will smoulder for hours. The fumes are laden with a nauseating smell, which so permeates the traveller's bedding and clothing as to be noticeable for weeks. These same fumes produce an extraordinary effect on the woodwork of the room, which rapidly gains a surface equal in colour and polish to the best old oak. The clothes of the people had now changed from indigo-dyed cotton to undyed sheep's wool. In every hamlet the older men sat in the sun spinning yarn, or knitting socks for themselves on two needles; this is accomplished by means of a diagonal down the centre of the foot and a seam at the back. The better-dressed boys wore garments of white felt. No seam was necessary in the whole coat, as it was shaped in the making to the size and form of the wearer. The felt is home-made, and many times we saw men treading out the macerated wool which is moulded to the shape required and dried in the sun. Shoes, coats and hats are made in this way, and whole villages are given up to the industry.

Lanchow, the capital of Kansu, is reached through a maze of narrow gullies. It is beautifully situated on the swift-flowing Yellow River, and is backed by the Blue Lotus Hills. Its streets are wide and crowded, and its population cosmopolitan. A splendid iron

free spot to be found. We were soon tired of searching and so we 485
set up our tent in a quiet corner and drove the ponies into an empty, unclaimed courtyard, of which there are a great many since the last Mohammedan rebellion. We set up the tent in order to "make the face attractive," as the Chinese say and so that people would not say: the European lay down in the street. But the wind kept blowing the tent down and so we lay in the open street after all; on top of everything, the temperature was 20°.

In the early morning we then found an inn (Plate XXXVIII). We were even obliged to call it a good one because the doors could be locked, but of course the guest had to bring his own lock. I immediately handed out a list of the things we still needed. Even tall Tschang hurried forth to do errands, although it would perhaps be more accurate to say he deigned to set out in order to look for things. He always undertook only those commissions that gave promise of the most profit for himself. Another servant repaired the windows of my room so well with tissue paper that the smoke from the wood fire which was lit on the floor of my room, presumably to warm me, made the tears run down my cheeks. Thus, the rare advantage of a 354 ● 132
hotel room with a door that locked was rather illusory. In the end it was better to warm one's hands at a blazing wood fire in an open court. In Dankar there is /177/ neither coal nor charcoal to be had, I might almost say, a proof of the fact that one is no longer in China. I need not say that nobody knows how to build a stove. The people of Dankar, Hsining and other places in highland China and Tibet have the sun to keep them warm in winter. Every day, even in December and January, women and children can be seen in a sheltered corner beside a wall, going about their usual business. Even though the air is several degrees below freezing, the sun is so warm that one does not feel the cold. Little children play out of doors from early morning on, dressed in only a short jacket with perhaps sock-like shoes on their little feet. But you never hear them complain about the cold. If you enter a yamen, you see the secretaries carrying their tables and chairs out of their offices and painting at their legal documents in the warmth of the sun.

At noon I had a call from the ting of Dankar, a friendly, middle- 570
aged gentleman from South China. The major of the town had called earlier and taken the occasion to offer me for sale a very lean pony. The ting came on behalf of the amban of Hsining in order again to confer with me about my journey to the Koko Nor. The amban I was told, requested me to wait another few weeks until

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000 then quickly succeeded in getting back the stolen goods and even the people who were most guilty. Later on soldiers had to be sent to Tombu mda only because the French government insisted that the body be handed over. But it had been thrown in the Yangtze Kiang and the soldiers returned without having accomplished their mission.

574 291 During my stay in Dankar I was invited to a pleasant dinner at the house of the ting, along with the officers of the place, the colonel, major, first lieutenant and a few second lieutenants, as well as a few Chinese compradors of European firms in Tientsin. Among the countless dishes the most interesting this time was the tasty Koko Nor fish which has no scales but an unbelievable number of bones. Although we all satsin the small workroom of the mandarin we were, of course, all dressed in the thickest furs which consisted of Tibetan lynx, snow leopard from Himalaya, Manchurian fox or fine lamb skin, according to the size of one's pocketbook. This made for an extremely motley assortment, for everyone wore his costly fur on the outside in order that all could see what he had on. Although I wore a thick fox fur under my Prince Albert I was nevertheless far too shabbily dressed and was often asked by the voluminous Chinese - many of them were not content to wear only one fur - whether I was not cold. I believe that at that time I had scarcely half the girth of a Chinese and that I must have looked like a ray of sunlight between the fat colossi. Our [354] feet with their felt soles several centimeters thick we braced against the edge of a coal brazier which was the sole source of heat in the room. Charcoal-briquettes were used and they had a dreadful odor. 574 521 It was therefore a long time before anyone noticed that the felt shoes of two of the guests who had got too near the fire were slowly being charred. Finally the ting asked very politely whether he might say something unpleasant and whether they were sure no one would feel hurt about it. He addressed his question to two lieutenants. They were sitting on pins and needles waiting to hear what unpleasantness their superior might know about them. But the rascally ting let them dangle for a long time until they themselves began to feel what was wrong, until even their thick socks finally began to smoulder. In the Kingdom of the Middle the loser is the last who need /182/ worry about derision. The stiff wax-like faces of the Chinese gentlemen now took on life. Before that only one at a time had spoken while the others had slowly rocked back and

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